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SUBJECT: A COMBATIVE WADE BLAMES SECK AND MEDIA FOR NEGATIVE IMAGE
OF SENEGAL; SAYS PROSECUTIONS TO COME

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Within a few minutes of the announcement of preliminary official results, newly reelected President Abdoulaye Wade hosted a two-hour press conference in front of the media, his cabinet and the entire diplomatic corps. Rather than being magnanimous in victory, Wade blamed former Prime Minister and second-place finisher Idrissa Seck for the negative image the media paints of Senegal. Wade concluded the press conference by saying that Seck will not return to being his political heir. Wade also said the judiciary had suspended legal proceedings against Seck and other key opposition figures to avoid detracting from the campaign, but, with the campaign over, legal proceedings will resume. END SUMMARY.

MEDIA AND OPPOSITION TO BLAME

2. (SBU) President Wade used his first post-election news conference to come out swinging. He began by acknowledging the serious discrepancy between what observers and the media had predicted and the actual vote on February 25. Wade blamed national and international media and opposition leaders for painting a very negative image of Senegal in general and of Wade and his government in particular. Wade noted that the incident at Dakar's Le Regal restaurant was the only serious incident during the campaign. Highlighting how calmly people had voted, Wade contrasted that with the image the media and opposition had painted of a Senegal on the verge of revolt. Wade asserted that no international newspaper wrote honestly and objectively about Senegal in the run-up to the election.

PROMISES, PROMISES

3. (U) Wade insisted he had kept his promises. He said democracy in Senegal has also progressed, and he thanked youth and women for their overwhelming support. He acknowledged the cost of living is high, but said Senegalese like his record. He then asked for a majority in the June 3 National Assembly elections. With Prime Minister and campaign manager Macky Sall at his side, he said there would be no major cabinet changes until after the legislative elections.

CORRUPTION: WHO'S REALLY CORRUPT?

4. (U) Wade then launched into what seemed to be his principal message: he and his son are not corrupt. His government audited the Socialist Government's accounts; he established an anti-corruption commission; his government prosecuted and imprisoned eight treasury inspectors for corruption; and he dismissed and brought corruption charges against former Prime Minister and long-time ally, Idrissa Seck. He blamed Seck for painting a negative image of Senegal at home and abroad. Saying judicial proceedings had been dropped to avoid distracting from the presidential campaign, Wade said new charges are coming. Then he dropped a political bombshell, holding up a handwritten letter from Idrissa Seck, dated December 29, 2005,

in which Seck agrees to repay 7 billion CFA francs (CFAF) (USD 14 million) in embezzled political funds following his release from jail (which occurred in February 2006).

CORRUPTION GOES BEYOND SECK

¶5. (U) Wade then leveled old accusations against other opposition leaders:

- He accused Amath Dansokho, the Mayor of Kedougou of embezzlement;
- Wade accused former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Moustapha Niasse of selling passports to Chinese citizens and of illegally buying his home on Dakar's Corniche; and
- Wade accused Socialist party leader and third-place finisher Tanor of having illegally sold licenses to Chinese fishermen.

COMMENT

¶6. (SBU) Far from magnanimous in victory, President Wade made it very clear he is tired of criticism of him and his record. He intends to go after those who have besmirched him and his son, Karim, and he especially intends to demonstrate that Idrissa Seck is unfit to ever become President of Senegal.

¶7. (U) Visit Embassy Dakar's classified website at <http://state.sgov/p/af/dakar>.

JACOBS